

Building Blocks

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From Birth to University and Beyond: Envisioning a New System of Education in California

In the three years since voters approved the California Children and Families Act, partners in Proposition 10 across the state have accomplished a great deal, establishing innovative new programs and improving existing systems to better prepare young children for educational and life success. But recent gains in our understanding of the science of early childhood and compelling recent findings on effective program intervention make clear that yet more can and must be done. Indeed, unprecedented investments and sweeping organizational reforms are needed if today's youngest Californians are to meet the demands our society will put on them as they get older. As we step up to this challenge, a model for a comprehensive new system of education is emerging, both in local neighborhoods, as schools, families, early educators, and other partners

begin to implement ambitious new school readiness programs, and in state policy, in the form of a ground-breaking new 20-year Master Plan for Public Education, starting from birth, that for the first time proposes that the education and care of young children be on an equal footing with K-12 and university education and unites them all in a single system.

While the changes now being proposed are ambitious, they reflect a realistic understanding of what must be done if our children are to succeed. Today, half of California's young children grow up in poor or low-income families, many with parents whose limited education and limited English make it more difficult for them to fully meet their children's needs. These children's later performance as students reflects the deficits they have experienced. In 1998, fewer than

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a quarter of all fourth and eighth graders statewide were found to be proficient or advanced readers in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test. In 2000, barely half of California's fourth and eighth graders demonstrated basic competence in math. About 40 percent of Latinos and African Americans entering high school in 1996 dropped out.¹

To turn this situation around, practitioners and policy-makers envision a major revamping of early childhood and education systems to create a comprehensive continuum of support for young children and their families, beginning before birth and continuing through the primary grades, so that by the third grade children are comfortable and confident learners who have gained the strong reading skills necessary for later success. Not focusing merely on cognitive development, this new model recognizes that children's educational success depends on good physical and mental health, safety and comfort with trusted adults and other children, and skill in using language to express thoughts and feelings, and that all these things must be nurtured by

parents, relatives and neighbors who care for children, early childhood educators, K-12 educators, and health and other providers who have the knowledge and resources to support young children's developmental needs and who are able to work together toward common goals. Below, we look at innovative school readiness initiatives in Santa Clara and Lake Counties, participants in the Children and Families Commission's statewide School Readiness Initiative, that are built on this understanding. We then turn to California's new 20-year Master Plan for Public Education, which translates the principles of the new model into universal state policy that will reach all young children.

Neighborhood School Readiness Programs Are Point of Entry for Families

By providing families with easy neighborhood access to preschool and infant-toddler care, health and mental health services, parent education, and a wide array of other integrated supports and services tailored to their particular needs, local school readiness programs offer children and their families a critically important doorway into the education system. Especially important for those children who will not experience formal care before entering kindergarten, these programs work inclusively to empower parents and informal care providers as equal partners with schools and formal child development providers in creating experiences and shared systems that help children move smoothly and successfully from early childhood settings into the primary school classroom.

The CCFC began funding Children and

Families County Commission school readiness programs last fall. Now in its third round of funding, the State Commission has 67 school readiness programs in process representing 25 counties, targeting the preschool age children and their families in the areas served by the lowest-performing schools (those scoring in



guage learners. The CCFC has committed a total of \$200 million to the program over four years, to be equally matched by local

Prop. 10 dollars. Each county's individual allocation is based on the county's birthrate and the number of students attending low-performing schools.

Santa Clara County School Readiness Initiative Offers "A Chance for Every Child"

In Santa Clara County, low-income Latino, Vietnamese and Cambodian families living in the densely crowded neighborhoods surrounding Franklin, McKinley and Santee elementary schools in San Jose have come together with the schools and a wide range of public and private partners to create a bold school readiness plan serving 600 young children, or about half of all 0- to 4-year-olds living in the area. In support of the initiative, called "A Chance for Every Child," the Children and Families First Commission of Santa Clara County and other partners have augmented a \$600,000 school readiness grant from the State Commission with direct and in-kind resources totaling roughly \$3 million annually for the next four years.

Despite language differences, limited education and time constraints faced by the many parents who hold down one or more jobs, 300 neighborhood parents provided leadership in an extensive planning process at all levels, from the county to the individual school site, to tailor a School Readiness Initiative that would speak to the community's needs and aspirations.

The resulting program expands formal preschool opportunities, actively reaches out to families whose children are in informal care

and strengthens linkages among school staff, early childhood educators and caregivers, and parents. One hundred new children will attend extended-day Head Start preschool in six new facilities at the three school sites. WestEd's Early Childhood Institute for Professional Development, Planning and Innovation will work to improve compensation and training, including cultural appropriateness, for early childhood educators. To ensure that other families not known to the schools are reached, nine "care coordinators" will assess families' needs and connect them to a range of services including health care,

with information available in four languages. Families with young children who do not have a medical home will either be enrolled in Medi-Cal or Healthy Families, if eligible, or in the new Healthy Kids plan, recently funded by the Children and Families First Commission of Santa Clara County, which expands eligibility for health coverage for children 0 to 5 with family incomes of up to 300 percent of the poverty level. (For more information on this and other Bay Area county health coverage plans for young children, please see the sidebar.) Seventy-five high-risk children and families will receive intensive in-home visitation by public health nurses, including support for first time mothers, and infants and toddlers regarding bonding, nutrition and health. The county's mental health department will provide a full-time MSW behaviorist, specializing in infant/toddler mental health, who will carry a caseload of 25 children, and provide education and training on young children's mental health for 200 parents. A mobile dental van will provide dental screenings and prevention at each school one day per week.

To provide support for parents and informal child caregivers and improve their understanding of young children's developmental needs, parenting classes and trainings, tutoring, literacy programs and Family Resource Libraries will be available. The San Jose Public Library's "Books for Little Hands" program will supply family child care providers with book bags for young children and support in how to use them to promote early language development. Individual families will receive book bags through the "Raising a Reader" program. To help children and families maintain their primary language, the library will work with monolingual Spanish-speaking families to help them learn English and then mentor another family in turn.

To ensure the greatest possible continuity for children as they move among parents, early childhood educators, and kindergarten and primary teachers, the program also strongly emphasizes cross-training and shared data. In a "Brain Wise" training now being planned for September, 250 parents, family and child care providers, preschool providers and K-3 teachers will go through a four-week course together on child development and learning

THREE BAY AREA COUNTIES FUND HEALTH COVERAGE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Children and Families County Commissions in Santa Clara, San Francisco and San Mateo have recently committed major resources to innovative outreach efforts and new health care plans, known as Healthy Kids, that will provide medical homes to the thousands of young children in these counties who are currently uninsured. Many of these children are not enrolled in coverage for which they are eligible under Medi-Cal or Healthy Families while thousands more are ineligible for these programs, either because of family income or immigration status. Even for those with incomes above 250 percent of the poverty level established for Healthy Families, housing and other costs in the Bay Area are so high that they drain many families' resources, making private insurance unaffordable. The new county initiatives will work to ensure that families enroll in existing Medi-Cal or Healthy Kids plans for which they are eligible. For those who are not, the new Healthy Kids coverage will serve those earning incomes of up to 300 or 400 percent of the poverty level, regardless of immigration status.

Santa Clara County. In 1997-98, there were 71,000 uninsured children ages 0 to 18 in Santa Clara County, 72 percent of whom were eligible for Medi-Cal or Healthy Kids but not enrolled. An additional 20,000 children were not eligible for either program. First in the nation to develop a comprehensive health insurance initiative, the county will conduct extensive countywide outreach for Medi-Cal, Healthy Families or its new Healthy Kids plan (income of up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level) for children not eligible for the first two. The new plan is open to all children up to age 18, but to ensure that funding is available to cover the youngest children, the Children and Families First Commission of Santa Clara County is contributing \$2 million annually for coverage of 0- to 5-year-olds. The county's School Readiness Initiative, "A Chance for Every Child," will be an important outreach vehicle for the new plan.

San Francisco County. As part of a similar effort to provide universal coverage for San Francisco children of all ages, the San Francisco Children and Families Commission is committing \$1 million annually for the next three years to address the health needs of approximately 3,000 children ages 0 to 5. Of that amount, \$860,000 will supplement county General Fund dollars for the new Healthy Kids coverage, in which the majority of young enrollees will be children of immigrant families. The remaining investment will support a new evening and weekend clinic for young children at San Francisco General Hospital, intended to expand the county's capacity to provide pediatric care for the many families who cannot get to a health care facility during regular business hours.

San Mateo County. With county housing costs among the highest in the country, the San Mateo Children and Families First Commission has identified young children's health coverage as their single most urgent need, according to Executive Director Kris Perry. In response, the Commission has made this its largest investment area, committing \$2.3 million annually for the next 10 years to make sure each child has a medical home. The San Mateo Healthy Kids plan, now being developed, will reach about 2,500 uninsured children younger than age 6 who are not eligible for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families. Because county living costs are so high—a single mother of two children needs an income of \$61,400 to be self-sufficient, according to data from the California Budget Project—the Commission decided to extend eligibility to families earning incomes of up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level. "This is something we can do that will make a big difference for working families," says Perry. For now, Prop. 10 is the only funding source for the initiative, but over time, the Commission hopes to leverage other funding and to see coverage expanded to older children.



styles. Staff will be trained in detecting developmental and learning variations. Later in the month, Head Start and kindergarten staff will exchange week-long visits in each other's classrooms.

As Jolene Smith, deputy director of the Children and Families First Commission of Santa Clara County, notes, "It was important to get the input from the community as to the 'why' of all this. In our county, most care is provided informally. Many centers don't have the right language for the child or the caregiver. We have to embrace parental choice. That includes educating parents on what their choices are and the implications for their children. A recent county study found that 80 percent of our parents had children in settings they were not entirely happy with, but the care was inexpensive and easy to access. To compete with that, formal providers have to be culturally appropriate, affordable and geographically accessible. It's up to us to develop strategies that raise the bar for everyone, both parents and providers."

Lake County Builds Bridges to School for Young Children

With school readiness a theme throughout all of Prop. 10 activities in

mostly rural, low-income Lake County, partners decided to focus their state-funded School Readiness Initiative on Burns Valley Elementary School in the town of Clear Lake. Burns Valley will act as a pilot for further school readiness program development and expansion in other schools. Among the poorest and lowest-performing schools in the county, Burns Valley is building its School Readiness Initiative on the success of the Prop. 10-funded Clear Lake Family Resource Center nearby, a recent Reading Excellence Act grant, a new preschool being built at the school and the many resources of its new on-site Healthy Start Family Support Center, whose services for K-12 students and their families will now be extended to the area's youngest children. The Healthy Start Center will also house the new School Readiness Center. According to Lake County Children and Families Commission Executive Director Susan Jen, the School Readiness Initiative was a perfect fit, "giving us a chance to initiate linkages from the ground up."

With many hard-working parents who participate actively in the school, Burns Valley families nonetheless struggle with poverty, substandard housing, domestic violence and low levels of education.

Their children suffer from unmet health and dental needs, family stress and experiential delays in language, cognitive, social, emotional or physical development.

To help families better meet their children's needs, the Initiative will serve 84 preschool-aged children, including 24 children who will enroll in the new on-site preschool and 60 additional children who will participate in HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Children), a home-based school readiness curriculum. HIPPY is an early intervention/prevention program that empowers parents to serve as their preschool-aged children's primary teachers. Materials for HIPPY will be funded by the recent federally-funded Reading Excellence Act grant, which was awarded to Burns Valley to create a continuum of literacy-related services for children and families from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The project's implementation team selected the HIPPY model because it is "designed for families like ours, in which parents have had limited schooling or are alienated from the schools." HIPPY home visitors will provide 30 sessions per year, every other week, in which parents build confidence in using successive packets of materials to work with their children on phonemic awareness and other



skills related to cognitive and literacy development. HIPPY staff will also address the social/emotional development of participating children. HIPPY parents meet in groups with program staff every other week to share experiences and discuss progress and goals. The Family Resource Center and Healthy Start will supplement HIPPY with other parenting and family support services.

To improve transitions to kindergarten, preschool and kindergarten teachers will share professional development and in-service training. Preschoolers who will be attending kindergarten are assessed in June. For those who need additional help getting ready, four-week summer kindergarten transition classes will be offered, followed by assessments again in August. Staff will conduct individual case conferences with parents, preschool and kindergarten teachers, and every kindergartner will have a personal learning plan. Each child will receive a "Readiness Backpack" with readiness materials, books and ideas, and parents will be taught how to use them, if needed.

These services form the heart of the Burns Valley program, but a wide range of other services for young children and their parents will be available through the Healthy Start Center at the school, including family literacy programs through the county library and a full range of case-managed health and social services, including on-site dental services.

Local school readiness programs like the Santa Clara and Lake County initiatives offer invaluable models for evaluation and exploration. With the help of Prop. 10 resources, County Commissions, school districts and other local government agencies can draw lessons from neighborhood innovations and begin to apply them countywide. Existing countywide systems can be expanded and improved, as with the Bay Area counties' new health coverage initiatives. But for all young children to be guaranteed their best chance of educational and life success all the way through the school years to college and beyond, it is clear that existing Prop. 10 resources will not be sufficient for the long haul. If Californians are committed to offering that chance, a new statewide system of support for young children must be built into the education system as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCHOOL READINESS WORKING GROUP FOR THE NEW MASTER PLAN FOR EDUCATION

1. Guarantee access for all infants and toddlers in low-income families to subsidized, high-quality child development services, and require health system accountability for health and developmental screening and assessment for all children, beginning at birth.
2. Phase in publicly funded universal, voluntary preschool for all California 3- and 4-year-olds regardless of income, require individual readiness transition plans for all preschoolers entering kindergarten, and phase in dual-language learning for all publicly subsidized programs for young children.
3. Require kindergarten attendance for all children; phase in full-day kindergarten; and align preschool kindergarten standards, curricula, and services.
4. For children in primary grades, require schools to implement rich, standards-based curricula and continue family supports and services through the primary grades; require "Ready Schools" plans of all public elementary schools to build on the gains that children have made in their early years.
5. Establish accountability and mandate professional development to ensure effective placement and teaching practices for children with disabilities or other special needs in inclusive and appropriate early education programs with suitable adult-child ratios.
6. Implement child learning and development goals and uniform program standards extending through all publicly funded early childhood programs and through kindergarten, supported by individualized learning plans for each child. Implement an assessment system for children ages 3 to 5 that assures appropriate usage of assessment instruments for instructional improvement and children's achievement.
7. Raise standards for early childhood educators and fund a professional development system that prepares, supports, and guides the compensation of all adults who care for children, creating a compensation and benefits system comparable to that of the public schools.
8. Create an accountability system (including program evaluation) that ensures public investments in child care and education result in improved school readiness and, over time, improved achievement.
9. Combine all existing state and federal child care and development programs into one early education system under the California Department of Education. Devolve decision-making regarding planning and resource allocation to county superintendents of schools.
10. Under Proposition 98, develop and fund a per-child allocation model of financing universal preschool, wraparound and support services, low-income infant and toddler care and education, and services through School Readiness Centers sufficient to meet the new system's quality standards and organizational infrastructure requirements.
11. Improve the availability, quality, and maintenance of education facilities for young children.
12. Establish a network of neighborhood-based School Readiness Centers that gives all families access to essential services to meet their children's developmental needs.
13. Provide stable and continuous health care for young children and pregnant women, develop a statewide system for issuing health and development "passports" and expand insurance coverage.
14. Provide incentives for paid family leave and employer/workplace family-friendly practices.

Master Plan Proposes Bold New State System, "At Scale"

After more than a year's work, the School Readiness Working Group, one of seven groups charged by the Legislature with developing a 20-year Master Plan for Education in California, has laid out the elements of that new system in detail. Sponsored by the CCFC, Working Group members looked at children's educational needs broadly and over time as they progress through the education system, to and through the university years. Under the proposed Plan, to be implemented over the next 20 years, half a million young Californians born each year will have guaranteed access to comprehensive, universal and developmentally appropriate early care and education. The Plan pulls together the disparate services and resources now available to young children and families and fills in existing gaps to offer high-quality services to every child and family, putting in

place a single, standardized system that creates a seamless and supportive transition not just to kindergarten, but all the way through third grade.

The Working Group made 14 specific recommendations calling for sweeping organizational and budgetary changes, most of them calling for new legislation. Many of these changes have been incorporated into the Master Plan document as a whole, which will be considered by the Legislature. For a list of all 14 Working Group recommendations, please see the sidebar. The complete set of Master Plan documents is also available on the Web site of the Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan, www.sen.ca.gov/ftp/SEN/COMMITTEE/JOINT/MASTER_PLAN/_home/

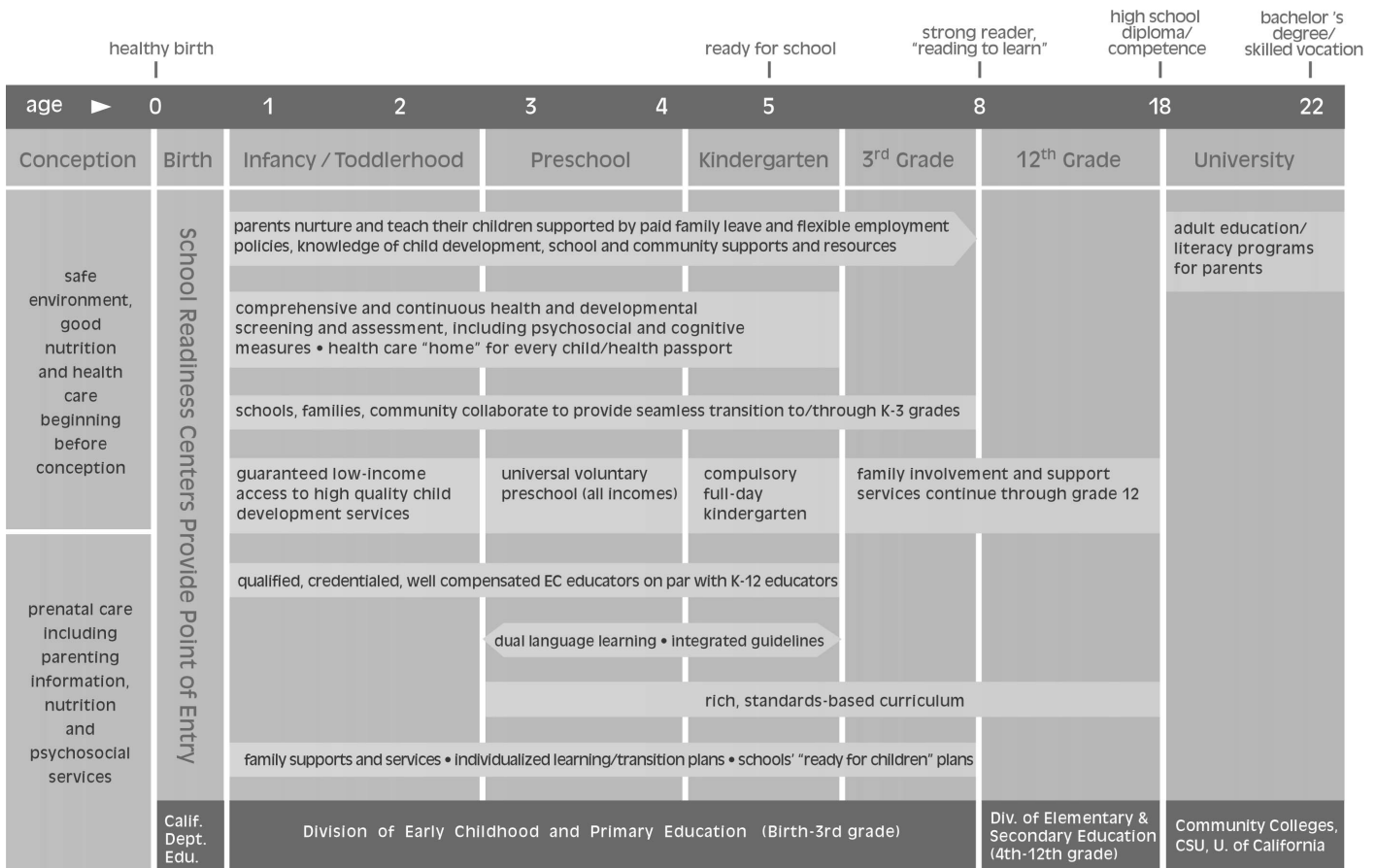
Key themes of the Plan include:

Local decision making. Recognizing that local communities are best able to assess and meet the unique needs of their children and families, the Plan devolves

planning and decision making for early education services from the state to the local level. The Plan makes the county superintendent of schools the lead local entity for governance and finance, with the guidance of an Advisory Council.

Guaranteed access to infant/toddler care for low-income families and voluntary preschool for all families, funded by a per-child state allocation under Proposition 98. To ensure a place for every low-income infant/toddler in high-quality child development, and for every child in preschool, the plan calls for integration of existing state and federal resources for young children through the California Department of Education (CDE), creating a per-child entitlement funding structure under the Proposition 98 guarantee for school funding. To administer these programs and resources, the plan calls for a fundamental reorganization of the CDE into two divisions: one for early childhood and primary education through grade three, and the other for elementary and secondary education, grades four through 12.

A New Model for Early Childhood Education



Continuity and consistency in child outcomes and program performance standards.

To establish continuity and consistency between the methods and standards of early childhood education and the kindergarten year, the Plan calls for a uniform assessment system, based on child learning and development goals, for children ages 3 to 5, to be communicated to parents on a regular basis. Every child in publicly funded family child care, preschool or kindergarten will have an individualized learning plan, and every preschooler entering kindergarten from a subsidized child development program will have an individualized transition plan jointly developed by the child development program and the school. To solidify and expand on children's earlier gains, schools will be required to implement standards-based rich learning experiences in kindergarten through the primary grades, and to continue providing family literacy, family education, and other social, health and nutrition supports to children and families. Each school, in partnership with families, preschools and the community, will create a “Ready Schools” plan to form the basis of each school's self-analysis and improvement plan. Annual data collection and evaluation systems for early childhood programs will be established and linked to K-12 data collection and evaluation.

Stable and continuous health care for young children and pregnant mothers.

As has been done in Santa Clara, San Francisco and San Mateo Counties, the Plan calls for expansion of Healthy Families eligibility to families with incomes of up to 300 percent of the poverty level. All children are to be provided with a health care home with a primary care provider who offers accessible, culturally competent services and provides every child with a portable health and development passport. Health systems will be accountable for ensuring that children's health and development are followed through a series of comprehensive developmental screenings and assessments, from birth to age 5. Comprehensive prenatal care is to be provided to expectant mothers.

Improved professional development and compensation for early childhood educators.

The plan calls for an integrated statewide professional development system to recruit, train and credential qualified early childhood educators under more rigorous education requirements. It establishes a compensation and benefits system for early childhood educators comparable to that of public schools.

School Readiness Centers as families' gateway to all essential services for their children.

Along with per-child entitlements for infant/toddler care and preschool, the Plan establishes a per-child allocation for the establishment of School Readiness Centers like those in Santa Clara and Lake Counties, described earlier, that will offer culturally and linguistically appropriate services to children, parents and informal child care providers, including parenting education and support, child and family development, literacy development, and health and mental health information and services, as determined by local needs.

Paid family leave and flexibility to empower parents.

Because parents' early bonds with their children are at the heart of



“Ready for School” Children Are:

- Eager to learn
- Exploring the world and learning how it works
- Listening, speaking, learning about reading and writing
- Feeling good about self, expressing feelings, relating well to others
- Physically healthy with optimal motor skills

children's growth and success, the Plan calls for the enactment of a paid family leave benefit, with contributions shared among employers, employees and public funds, that

would empower new parents to choose to remain home with their infants during the critical first months of life without facing intolerable economic losses. It also proposes incentives to promote employer flexibility for parents in regard to benefits, job scheduling, job sharing and use of sick leave.

Collectively, the Plan's recommendations amount to a reconceptualization of the state's entire education system, especially for California's many low-income families—extending its reach back in time to infancy, and erasing the sharp boundary children must now cross at kindergarten to instead create smooth, developmentally appropriate transitions. But the Plan also broadens the definition of what education must entail if children are going to succeed: continuity with home and informal care, partnership with and comprehensive support for parents, health services and systems of accountability, with an emphasis on psychosocial and cognitive issues.

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A Growing Number of States Move

A growing body of research indicates that a child's early learning experiences set the stage for school readiness and can help ensure that all children start kindergarten on equal footing. This research is being put into action as more and more states recognize that early care and education programs are critical to families. As a result, many parts of the country have increased public investment in early care and education programs. That is the case in California, where the CCFC-spearheaded school readiness component of the Master Plan for Education compiled a comprehensive set of recommendations that, taken together, help to ensure the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of our youngest children in the early years and later in life.

The school readiness component of the Master Plan for Education lauds universal preschool as a promising strategy, making free, publicly-financed optional pre-kindergarten programs available to all children in California. Utilizing the Master Plan for Education as a road map, California is building a comprehensive system of services and linkages for young children and their families. Coupled with other critical health and social services, such as health care, family support and parent education, universal preschool is a key component of an effective statewide early care and education effort.

According to the Master Plan, universal preschool can be accomplished in California through an equitable per-child allocation model for financing early care and education. The plan would include a guaranteed preschool allocation for 3- and 4-year-olds, additional social support services for low-income families, school readiness services for all children through School Readiness Centers and early education and flexible support services for all low-income families with children birth to age 3. Though preschool programs are often linked to schools,

high-quality programs that adhere to state standards can be offered by varied community-based providers and do not necessarily include classroom-based activities. Recent reports by several national organizations have helped to create a groundswell of support for the idea of universal preschool. In a recently issued policy statement, the Committee for Economic Development, an independent, nonpartisan organization of business and education leaders

In California, there are a growing number of initiatives underway that address some of these deficits, promising to expand the early care and education programs and services available to families helping to ensure the healthy social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of young children. Several of the programs described below informed both the long-term vision articulated in the school readiness component of the

Master Plan for Education and other CCFC-funded programs such as the School Readiness Initiative, which is being implemented in many communities throughout the state. The School Readiness Initiative is designed to help families, schools and communities better prepare children to enter school ready to succeed through the development of School Readiness Centers and Programs offering comprehensive child development and family support services in easy-to-access locations, most of which are in or near schools. The following model programs put school readiness research findings into action.



dedicated to policy research on economic and social issues, came out in favor of adopting universal preschool in the United States. Their report found that the United States' approach to early education has serious shortcomings. Among their findings, the CED reported that:

- Although many young children spend time in some kind of out-of-home care, many are not exposed to developmentally appropriate activities that would improve their readiness for school.
- The lack of integration of early education and child care programs creates unnecessary challenges for working parents.
- Compared to other developed countries, in particular those in Western Europe, the U.S. lags behind in terms of early learning systems.
- The U.S. must invest in building a strong early learning and development system that is available to all young children.

New York's Universal Pre-kindergarten Program

Georgia and New York are among a handful of states committed to phasing in free publicly-funded pre-kindergarten for any 4-year-old, regardless of his or her family's income level or work status. Both states have employed similar strategies, including utilizing the public school system together with private schools, community agencies, and other nonprofit organizations, to develop and administer quality early care and education programs.

Since 1997, New York's program has delegated planning to more than 700 local school districts in the state that can opt-in to the universal pre-kindergarten program. District superintendents must appoint a Pre-K Policy Advisory Board that includes diverse community members who are charged with developing a Pre-K plan that meets all of the state's quality standards.

Toward Universal Preschool Programs

This plan is then submitted to the New York State Education Department.

While the funds flow through the public school system, school districts are required to allocate at least 10 percent of their funds to community-based providers. Programs are required to provide a half-day or more program (two and a half hours each day, five days per week), provide comprehensive services to address the needs of parents and integrate children with special needs and disabilities. As in California's School Readiness Initiative model and other successfully evaluated early care and education programs, providers are required to communicate with elementary schools, coordinate support services and facilitate involvement of parents and other caregivers.

The proportion of economically disadvantaged children in each district determines priority for state funds, which include a minimum per child allocation of \$2,700. One quarter of the 4-year-olds in New York State are currently served by some form of pre-kindergarten. That figure, however, is expected to increase as the program continues to be phased in through 2003. By then, it is expected to serve all of the estimated 275,000 4-year-olds throughout the state.

Georgia's Free Pre-kindergarten Program

Georgia's universal preschool program is administered by an independent state agency, the Office of School Readiness, that reports directly to the governor. The program began as a pilot in 1993 serving 20 public schools in low-income districts. Today, the program serves more than 63,000 4-year-olds. In conjunction with Head Start, about 70 percent of the 4-year-olds in the state now attend some form of publicly subsidized preschool.

Under the Georgia model, public and private child care and preschool providers are eligible to receive state payments for every enrolled child if they use one of several approved curricula and meet other state standards. Providers must renew their contracts annually. On-site "resource coordinators" offer parents seminars on child development, employment and training counseling and assistance in accessing health care services. The resource coordinators also help the children transition to elementary school.

Georgia utilizes lottery funds to finance free pre-kindergarten for all 4-year-olds in

the state. In 1999-2000, Georgia Lottery for Education funds totaled \$224 million. In addition, to augment state lottery funds, the Georgia Department of Human Resources provides before- and after-school services, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program offers subsidized meals for low-income children. State lottery funds are also utilized to supplement federally-funded Head Start Programs so that they can offer full-day and full-year programs for eligible children. Initial evaluations appear promising. First-year evaluation results of a 12-year longitudinal study of 4,000 children revealed that those who had participated in the program rated higher than the general student body in five areas of development, promotion to first grade, attendance, first-grade academic development and achievement and standardized test scores.

Massachusetts' Community Partnership Model

Through its Community Partnerships for Children (CPC) program, Massachusetts' State Department of Education makes available state and federal funds—totaling nearly \$80 million in 1999—through a competitive grant process to local community councils to provide educational and other services to children ages 3 to 5 through tuition subsidies. Priority is given to children in families earning up to 125 percent of state median income, and costs are determined on a sliding fee scale. The program is designed to support a coordinated comprehensive system of care for families through existing preschool programs such as child care providers, Head Start and public schools.

All programs must meet standard requirements. For example, private programs must be licensed by the Office of Child Care Services, and center-based programs must seek accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Programs can use state grant funds for accreditation fees, materials, supplies and professional development activities toward their accreditation efforts. Due in part to this program, Massachusetts has the highest percentage of nationally accredited programs in the country. In addition, the quality improvements made through these requirements have reached an additional 49,500 children who did not receive tuition subsidies, but who attended CPC-funded centers.

Ohio's Head Start Program Model

In Ohio, the state supplements federal Head Start funds so that it, together with its Public School Preschool Program, can provide pre-kindergarten to nearly all low-income 3- and 4-year-olds (approximately 57,000 children). Nearly \$100 million per year supports this state and Head Start partnership, a figure unsurpassed by any other state in the country.

Early care and education sites supported by this collaborative can use funds for staff training and compensation, as well as provide services such as full-day programs, health screenings and parent involvement programs. With combined state and federal funds, providers can offer free programs to families with incomes at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. In addition, because funds have been used to bolster existing early care and education programs, children who are not eligible for Head Start still benefit from the programs that have strict quality requirements and comprehensive services.

Conclusion

These initiatives all demonstrate the visionary programs that have been developed through partnerships between governments, schools, community-based organizations and early care and education providers. However, though easily accessible early care and education programs provide support to working families and early learning experiences and socialization for young children, investment in these programs throughout the country has not kept pace with research confirming the importance of preschool programs and access to comprehensive services.

In California, the CCFC and County Commissions are participating in much of the groundbreaking work that is beginning to happen in the early care and education field. Looking closely at models already in place will be invaluable as efforts in California materialize. The programs currently underway throughout the state, including the School Readiness Initiative, together with the recommendations contained in the school readiness component of California's unprecedented Master Plan for Education, promise to transform fragmented programs into a seamless system of support, including education and health and social services, for our youngest children. ■

A Major Investment That Will Pay Off

This new model for early childhood education represents a major expansion of our current education system, as well as health and other systems. As such, it will require a major commitment of resources. But research shows that the investment will pay off. A recent longitudinal study of the Title I-funded Chicago Child-Parent Centers, which have served low-income children from preschool through third grade in Chicago's public schools since 1967, showed that by age 21, participants had significantly higher rates of high school completion, lower rates of juvenile arrests, particularly for violent offenses, and fewer special education placements, grade retentions and incidents of child maltreatment than did the control group. In an

important implication for future school success, the study found that extended program participants (those who participated from preschool through second or third grade, by comparison with those who participated in the preschool portion or the primary grade portion of the program only) also had higher achievement test scores in adolescence, and had the highest levels of

adjustment. A subsequent cost-benefit study found that for those children in extended participation, \$6.09 was returned to society at large (including \$3.59 in public benefits) for every dollar invested, in the form of savings from increased earnings capacity, associated tax revenues, criminal justice system savings, savings on tangible costs to crime victims and savings on school remedial services. For the 100,000 children served by the Child-Parent Centers since their inception in 1967 the researchers calculate a public savings in 1998 dollars of \$2.6 billion.²

Although California's fiscal condition is

currently constrained, the new Master Plan is a long-range road map that will provide guidance for expenditures as funding becomes available. In the meantime, policy-makers can begin to move ahead by taking less costly actions administratively, and can set in place priorities for funding the Plan's more costly components in stages, beginning to offer low-income infant/toddler care for families attending the state's lowest performing schools, for example.

In order for this sweeping new vision of early childhood education to become reality, the understanding and long-term commitment of policy-makers, practitioners and the general public will be essential.

Recent focus groups conducted by the CCFC found that the public already supports extending the public education system

to younger children ages 3 and older, and, as the examples discussed in this newsletter show, local communities are already making significant investments in bringing the model to life in their neighborhoods. Building on the work that has already been done, the Master Plan will help guide the necessary state commitments to create a comprehensive sustainable system for all young Californians. Over time, the new model can

help restore California's education system as a whole to its former place of national preeminence and help our children to a much brighter future, with benefits for all. ■

1. From School Readiness Working Group Final Report, page 18.

2. A.J. Reynolds, J.A. Temple, D.L. Robertson, and Emily A. Mann, "Age 21 Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Center Program, Executive Summary" June, 2001. Presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Prevention Research in Washington, D.C.



As you can see from the new name and logo in this issue of Building Blocks, the California Children and Families Commission has adopted "First 5 California" as our new overarching school readiness identity. A good name is easily identifiable, memorable and gives an idea of what an organization does. We believe that the name First 5 California conveys the importance of the first five years of life, the period of time during which a child's brain develops most dramatically. Together with the work of the CCFC, the name First 5 California will help the public understand the overall purpose of the CCFC.

In order to have a statewide presence, the CCFC must help ensure that all of the programs and services implemented under the Prop. 10 mantle are viewed as part of a cohesive body. In particular, the School Readiness Initiative is a centerpiece of the CCFC's work. Our goal is to ensure that the combined School Readiness Initiative efforts of the State Commission and partner County Commissions will be easily identified with the new name and logo.

The new name will be used in all Commission public education efforts, on any printed materials developed and, over time, may become the primary identity of the organization. For the time being, the CCFC will retain its formal organizational name, a practice that is common among government organizations. For instance, the North Carolina Partnership for Children runs "Smart Start," and here in California, the Healthy Families Program is run by the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board (MRMIB). We hope that First 5 California will unify the many different elements of the CCFC and convey a sense of continuity, connection and cooperation among them. ■



Prop. 10 - Facts at a Glance

What is Prop. 10?

In November 1998, voters passed the California Children and Families Act, an initiative that added a 50 cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs to promote early childhood development, from prenatal to age 5. Prop. 10 was designed to address the lack of public funding and support for early childhood development in the wake of a growing body of scientific evidence indicating the emotional, physical, social and developmental environment to which children are exposed has a profound impact on their ability to reach their greatest potential in school and in life.

How does it work?

Children and Families Commissions at the state level and in each of California's 58 counties are carrying out the work of the initiative.

The California Children and Families Commission (CCFC) is the leadership agency and statewide coordinator for the California Children and Families Act. The CCFC provides oversight, training and assistance to the County Commissions and statewide education on the importance of early childhood development. In addition, 20 percent of the overall revenue is administered by the CCFC to offer technical assistance to County Commissions, to conduct research and evaluation on the best policies and practices for young children and to develop education, infrastructure and training programs for parents, child care providers and other professionals.

The bulk of the Prop. 10 funds, 80 percent, go directly to the County Commissions. The County Commissions must develop

strategic plans consistent with CCFC guidelines on funding local child development programs and services but they also have maximum flexibility in tailoring funding and programs to local needs. Some CCFC requirements for County Commissions include obtaining broad public input and submitting audits on spending to the CCFC.

Prop. 10 mandates that each Commission form at least one advisory committee to provide expertise and support. The State Commission has established an Advisory Committee on Diversity, charged with helping to ensure that statewide Prop. 10 programs meet the needs of California's ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse population and children with special needs and disabilities.

How are Commissioners chosen?

The CCFC's member commission is comprised of seven members appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Rules Committee. The Secretary for Education and the Secretary of the Health and Human Services Agency (or their designees) also serve as ex-officio members. Each county Board of Supervisors appoints a five to nine member Commission to include a member of the board of supervisors and two members from among those who manage county functions (e.g., health or behavioral health services, social services, or tobacco prevention and treatment services). The remaining members can be drawn from county functions or organizations that work in the early childhood development arena (e.g., child care resource and referral agencies, community-based organizations, school districts and medical, pediatric, or obstetric associations). ■

CALIFORNIA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

Commissioners:

S. Kimberly Belshè, a program director at the James Irvine Foundation and the former director of the California Department of Health Services, brings to the Commission an extensive knowledge of California's health programs.

Elizabeth Rice Grossman is a retired investment professional who brings a commitment to philanthropy and children's issues to the Commission. She currently serves as a member of the Juvenile Probation Commission in the City and County of San Francisco, is on the Board of Directors for The Omega Boys Club and manages two charitable foundations with her family.

Sandra Gutierrez, an expert in the development of child care services, is currently the California project director for Child Care Programs at The Enterprise Foundation. Previously, she served as project coordinator for the Child Care Law Project.

Karen Hill-Scott, Ed.D., is nationally known for her work in child care and development. President of her own children's television consulting firm, she is also a co-founder and board member of Crystal Stairs, Inc., and an adjunct professor of planning at UCLA.

Rob Reiner, a filmmaker and activist for infants and young children, serves as the chair of the Commission after devoting substantial time and resources to the passage of Proposition 10 as part of his crusade to shift the national consciousness to value early childhood development.

Louis A. Vismara, M.D., is a founding member of the M.I.N.D. Institute at the University of California, Davis. The interdisciplinary organization brings together researchers, clinicians, educators, parents and children to investigate and provide resources for a wide range of neurodevelopment disorders, from autism to learning disabilities. He also serves as a consultant to State Senator John Burton.

Ex Officio Members:

Grantland Johnson, as Governor Davis' Secretary of Health and Human Services, has appointed Undersecretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, Glen Rosselli, to serve on the Commission in his place. Prior to joining the agency, Mr. Rosselli worked in the Federal Government serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Analysis in the Treasury Department and senior advisor to Secretary Rubin.

Kerry Mazzoni, as Governor Davis' Secretary for Education, has appointed Assistant Secretary for Education, Theresa Garcia, to serve on the Commission in her place. Ms. Garcia brings a strong background in education issues and policy and program analysis to her post. She currently directs the Office's broad range of policy activities related to early childhood and K-12 education.

Staff:

Jane I. Henderson, Ph.D., Executive Director

Joe P. Munso, Chief Deputy Director